

**Regional Panel Highlights of Activities and Recommendations for the
Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force Meeting
November 4-5, 2015**

Regional Panel Name: Mississippi River Basin Panel (MRBP)

Submitted by: October 20, 2015

Key ANS Activities from May 2015 through October 2015:

Major Accomplishments (bullets):

- Jessica Howell, Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism, was elected MRBP first-term co-chair (term began July 1, 2015).
- Completed security upgrades to MRBP website (www.MRBP.org).
- Made funding available to support the production of ANS outreach materials and to cover travel expenses for ANS representatives to staff an ANS outreach and education booth at the September 2015 International Boatbuilders' Exhibition and Conference.
- Provided travel support for a commercial fisherman to accompany state and federal agency representatives to China in October to investigate the unified harvest method of Asian carp and evaluate its potential use in US river systems.
- Participated in a teleconference interview and provided information for the Government Accountability Office audit AIS audit.
- Reviewed and provided comments on the ANS Task Force Report to Congress.

Ongoing Work (bullets):

- Planning and preparations for MRBP coordination meeting January 13-14, 2016, in Gulfport, MS.
- MRBP is in the process of purchasing Whac-A-Mussel from Recycled Fish for AIS outreach events.
- Outreach and Education committee seeking bids to redesign the MRBP website design.
- Outreach and Education committee is working with the Sea Grant Law Center to organize an Attorneys General workshop in conjunction with the Upper Midwest Aquatic Invasive Species Conference in October 2016. The planning group is considering baitfish regulations as the topic for the workshop.
- Providing travel support for MRBP At-large member to participate on a NISC committee working on fracking.
- The Research and Risk Assessment Committee is also trying to find speakers familiar with regulation of fracking and water garden industries to speak with panel members at the January 2016 coordination meeting.
- Panel members are finalizing revisions to the MRBP's 'Guidelines for Developing Commercial Harvest Policy for Aquatic Invasive Species.'

- Prevention and control committee is developing work plans for implementation of several recommendations in the MICRA grass carp report.

Panel Recommendations to the ANSTF:

1. The MRBP and Great Lakes Panel urge the appropriate federal agencies to implement recommendations #6 – 8 contained in the MICRA report to the USFWS entitled “The use of grass carp in the United States: Production, triploid certification, shipping, regulation, and stocking recommendation for reducing spread throughout the United States”.

Specifically, those recommendations are as follows:

(6) Modify the scope and Standards of the USFWS National Triploid Grass Carp inspection and Certification Program (NTGCICP), including direct participation of states and Grass Carp distributors.

(7) The USFWS should work with states, triploid Grass Carp producers, and other partners to develop defensible ploidy testing procedures for quality control and law enforcement purposes in support of state random inspection programs.

(8) Develop and provide information about NTGCICP, Grass Carp regulations, and best management practices for natural resource managers, aquaculturists, and the general public.

See the attached excerpt from the MICRA report for details and justification.

2. The MRBP recommends that the USACE and other responsible federal agencies identify opportunities and locations for assessing the effectiveness of options and technologies for preventing bidirectional ANS transfer between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River Basins, and other basins nationwide. Research and evaluation of technologies to prevent bidirectional ANS transfer should be implemented concurrent with the Brandon Road Feasibility Study, the scope of which is limited to stopping the upstream transfer of some ANS, primarily Asian carps and other swimming organisms. Further, the MRBP recommends that the USACE consider testing some of the bidirectional technologies in areas outside of the Great Lakes Region. One example of where such technology would be beneficial and could prevent an impending interbasin transfer of silver carp is the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway that connects the Tennessee and Mobile river basins. The MRBP recommends that the USACE, and other federal agencies, consider this waterway and others outside of the Great Lakes area as potential locations for the development and testing of options and technologies for preventing the bidirectional spread of ANS.

See accompanying letter for additional information.